

West Aurora High School – A History

A high school for the west side of Aurora came into existence in 1868. Professor Frank H. Hall was elected superintendent of schools and developed a high school curriculum. Prior to Hall's arrival, students simply ran out of courses to take and did not continue their schooling.



Old Stone School



Oak Street School



West Aurora High on Blackhawk Street



New York Street location in the 1950s



West Aurora High School today

In 1868, the new West Side High School met on the third floor of Old Stone School. This building was constructed in 1852 and greatly expanded in 1865. The school stood on the site of today's Todd Elementary School at Oak and New York Street. In 1870, the first graduating class was comprised of five members (four girls and one boy). In June 1884, the Old Stone School was destroyed by fire.

Immediately thereafter, a beautiful new brick building, called Oak Street School, was built at the same location. It cost \$45,000 to construct and opened in January 1885. High school classes were held on the second floor of that building. Oak Street School burned down on November 7, 1906, but was rebuilt in 1907.

In 1906, a three-story West Aurora High School was constructed at the corner of Galena Boulevard and Blackhawk Street. Speakers at the dedication included Superintendent A.V. Greenman and his predecessors Frank H. Hall and J. H. Freeman. The high school had seven teachers in 1907, including the principal. The curriculum included English, science, history, drawing, math, Latin and commercial courses.

By 1920, there were seventy-two students in the graduating class and twenty-two teachers. The West High band formed in that year and appeared at the Thanksgiving football game in 1922. In 1936, West adopted its Blackhawk nickname. By the late 1930s, the school's curriculum consisted of four divisions: college preparatory, commercial, vocational and general.

The high school existed on this site until 1953, when the building became the district's junior high school. In the 1970s it was sold to Aurora Christian School which occupied the site until 2004. The building remained vacant until it was demolished in 2015.

The current West Aurora High School, located on West New York Street (formerly called Walnut Street), was built in the early 1950s and dedicated in 1953. The Class of 1954 was the first class to graduate from the school.

Over the years, additions and renovations have enlarged and improved the structure. Additions included a new wing in the early 1960s, an auditorium in the mid-1960s, a new library, technology center, cafeteria and additional classroom space in the late 1990s. In 2004, a new field house, classroom wing and choral space were added.

Today West Aurora High School has more than 3,300 students and a staff/faculty of nearly 300. The campus occupies an area of nearly a square half-mile and encompasses an athletic stadium, extensive playing fields and courts. The campus also includes an arboretum-like collection of more than 200 trees.

The academic offerings range from college prep to career education. Award winning extracurricular activities include the arts, twenty-three sports, technology and cultures. One of the greatest strengths of the school is the success with which it has embraced the diversity of the student body, thereby enriching the surrounding communities.

